

Worksheet
Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA)

Little Fish Lake HMA Wild Horse Gather

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

OFFICE: Tonopah Field Office

TRACKING NUMBER: DOI-BLM-B020-2015-0015-DNA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER:

PROPOSED ACTION TITLE/TYPE: Little Fish Lake HMA Drought Wild Horse Gather

LOCATION/LEGAL DESCRIPTION: The Little Fish Lake HMA is located 65 miles northeast of Tonopah and 45 miles north of Warm Springs, Nevada, in Nye County.

APPLICANT (if any): BLM

A. Description of the Proposed Action and any applicable mitigation measures

The Proposed Action is to helicopter gather approximately 150 wild horses within the BLM-managed Little Fish Lake Herd Management Area (HMA). One hundred horses would be permanently removed from the HMA. The remaining 50 wild horses would be returned to the HMA. Population growth suppressants (sex ratio adjustment of 60:40 to favor studs, and fertility control - specifically the Porcine Zona Pellucida 22-month immunocontraception vaccine - application to all mares) would be affected upon returned horses.

Gathering is necessary because it has been determined that drought conditions have resulted in insufficient amounts of forage to support the existing population of wild horses within the Little Fish Lake HMA. Removal, which is a Drought Response Action (DRA) described and analyzed in the Battle Mountain District Drought Management Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-NV-B000-2012-0005-EA (page 12), is needed for the immediate protection of wild horses and rangeland resources.

Gather operations would begin on or around February 18, 2015. Gather operations would be conducted in accordance with the Gather Plan, Wild Horse and Burro Program Standard Operating Procedures and Comprehensive Animal Welfare Policy. The following table illustrates past and present grazing use, appropriate management level (AML) for wild horses, and current populations of horses and numbers to be gathered within the Wagon Johnnie Allotment (the allotment and the Little Fish Lake HMA share the same borders).

**Grazing Use, Wild Horse AML, and the Current Wild Horse
Population in the Wagon Johnnie Allotment**

Grazing Allotments Associated	Livestock Permit Type	Livestock Use	Wild Horse AML	Current Estimated Population	Numbers to be Gathered
Wagon Johnnie (Entire HMA)	Cattle	There has been no grazing use from 2005-2010 and from the winter of 2013 to the present	39	200 Horses	150 horses

B. Land Use Plan (LUP) Conformance

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the Tonopah Resource Management Plan (RMP), approved October 1997, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following RMP decisions (objectives, terms, and conditions):

- To create healthy, productive rangelands through implementation of ongoing rangeland monitoring and evaluation program;
- To improve the condition of public rangelands to enhance the productivity for all rangeland values;
- To manage wild horse and/or burro populations within HMAs at levels which will preserve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance consistent with other multiple-use objectives;
- Manage Wild horses and/or burros at appropriate management level (AML);
- Assure sufficient water and forage exists for wild horses and/or burros in HMA's;
- When the AML is exceeded, remove excess wild horses and/or burros to a point which may allow up to three years of population increase before again reaching the appropriate management level;
- Manage the vegetation resource for the desired plant communities;
- Manage for proper functioning condition on all streamside riparian areas, and all springs, seeps, wet meadows and other riparian areas in the Tonopah Planning Area;
- Habitat for all federally listed threatened and endangered species or Nevada BLM Sensitive Species (plant and animal) will be managed to maintain or increase current populations of these species.

C. Identify applicable National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents and other related documents that cover the Proposed Action.

Battle Mountain District Drought Management Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-NV-B000-2012-0005-EA, dated June 22, 2012 (Drought EA). As indicated in the Drought EA (page 14), the number of animals removed may be restricted due to constraints on holding space and long-term holding costs.

List by name and date other documentation relevant to the Proposed Action (e.g., biological assessment, biological opinion, watershed assessment, allotment evaluation, and monitoring report).

- Wild and Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971
- Federal Land Policy and Management Act 1976
- Public Rangelands Improvement Act 1978
- Little Fish Lake Herd Management Area Monitoring Report, Winter 2014
- Drought Monitor and VegDRI Reports, Various dates in 2011- 2014.
- Taylor Grazing Act 1934

D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria

- 1. Is the new proposed action a feature of, or essentially similar to, an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? Is the project within the same analysis area, or if the project location is different, are the geographic and resource conditions sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? If there are differences, can you explain why they are not substantial?**

Yes. The current Proposed Action, the gathering and removal of wild horses, is one of the Drought Response Actions (DRAs) described and analyzed in the Battle Mountain District Drought Management Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-NV-B000-2012-0005-EA, dated June 22, 2012 (Drought EA). This Proposed Action is based on both regional data (<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>; <http://vegdiri.unl.edu/>) and site-specific monitoring data collected consistent with the Battle Mountain District drought detection and monitoring plan. As required by the Drought EA, monitoring results have been evaluated and it was determined that neither the existing drought conditions nor the welfare of the gathered horses would be improved through other DRAs. Documentation of the data collected during the period from 4/30/13 through 7/10/13 indicates that current range conditions warrant the gather of wild horses from the Little Fish Lake HMA.

- 2. Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the new proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, and resource values?**

Yes, the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document for responding to drought conditions remains appropriate with respect to the current Proposed Action.

Since the completion of the Drought EA in 2012, there are no new environmental concerns, interests, resource values or circumstances that have been introduced that would require additional alternatives to be developed.

- 3. Is the existing analysis valid in light of any new information or circumstances (such as, rangeland health standard assessment, recent endangered species listings, updated lists of BLM-sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the new proposed action?**

Yes. The existing analysis covers the current drought conditions that were documented in 2012. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor (<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/> visited

12/18/2014) the drought is forecasted to persist across most areas of Nevada. Drought monitoring data collected from 4/30/13 through 12/9/14 has confirmed that conditions have not improved within the Little Fish Lake HMA. Given the continuation of the drought, the BLM can reasonably conclude that new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the potential impacts of the current Proposed Action.

4. Are the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document?

Yes. The direct, indirect, and cumulative effects for the current Proposed Action are similar to those identified in the Drought EA. The EA sufficiently analyzed all affected resources related to the implementation of the current Proposed Action, including the gather and removal of wild horses.

5. Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current Proposed Action?

Yes. The public involvement and interagency review associated with the Drought EA is adequate for the current Proposed Action.

The Drought EA was made available to the public for 30-day comment period on April 13, 2012. The EA was also made available to the Nevada State Clearinghouse which prepared the notification letter and made the EA available for review by over 50 different local, county, state, and federal agencies from around the state. The EA was published on the Battle Mountain District website and NEPA Register. All comments were reviewed and considered in the preparation of the Drought EA.

E. Persons/Agencies/BLM Staff Consulted

Name/Title	Resource Represented	Signature
Austin Brewer, Wild Horse and Burro Specialist	Wild Horses	\s\ Austin Brewer
David Price, Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife/T&E	\s\ David Price
Jeremy Sykes, Rangeland Management Specialist	Range/Vegetation/Soils	\s\ Jeremy Sykes
Mark Ennes, Planning and Environmental Coordinator	NEPA Compliance	\s\ Mark Ennes

Note: Refer to the EA/EIS for a complete list of the team members participating in the preparation of the original environmental analysis or planning documents.

Conclusion *(If you found that one or more of these criteria is not met, you will not be able to check this box.)*

☒ Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal conforms to the applicable land use plan and that the NEPA documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitute BLM's compliance with the requirements of the NEPA.

\s\ Austin Brewer

Signature of Project Lead

\s\ Mark Ennes

Signature of NEPA Coordinator

\s\ Timothy J. Coward

12/31/14

Signature of Responsible Official:

Date

Note: The signed Conclusion on this Worksheet is part of an interim step in the BLM's internal decision process and does not constitute an appealable decision. However, the lease, permit, or other authorization based on this DNA is subject to protest or appeal under 43 CFR Part 4 and the program-specific regulations.